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EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE
WINTHROP, IOWA

T. C. STEPHENS - THE COMPLETE BIRD-WATCHER ANECDOTES FROM OTHER DAYS

By WILLIAM YOUNG WORTH

SIoux CITY, IOWA

(With photographs by the author)

Even though we go through a long list of Iowa ornithologists, the late T. C. Stephens, professor at Morningside College, Sioux City, was one of our most able workers and most distinguished ornithologists. Judged from any angle, as a laboratory research scientist or as a careful field observer, he comes very near the top of our list.

The good doctor's work on this earth is finished. The present writer is proud to have had him as an intimate friend for many years, as well as an instructor in college days.

Much of Dr. Stephens' professional work is well known and documented. But some of my pleasant experiences with him as a companion seem worthy of putting into the permanent record. A number of little anecdotes reveal his character and furnish sidelights into the nature of this remarkable man. So that some of these memorabilia will be preserved and not pass into the oblivion that is imposed on unwritten biography, the following stories are presented.

Over the years this writer made numerous field trips with Dr. Stephens, but one that stands out was a trip that included every (then) established state park in Iowa. We made this in the late summer of 1928. On this trip Stubert Stephens was the third member of the party. Stubert was recovering from a bad case of cement-dust poisoning. I think the several weeks outing did him a great deal of good. We enjoyed his company and also the numerous pencil sketches he drew of the things that interested him.

One amusing incident took place in Ledges State Park. There were a few people in the park that morning, which was rather cool. Dr. Stephens wore a long, well-beaten trench coat and a hat that was rather full and inclined to roll to a point at the front. We started for the heights, where the light was



DES MOINES RIVER NEAR DOLLIVER STATE PARK



DR. STEPHENS PHOTOGRAPHING IN LEDGES STATE PARK, 1928

better. We noticed a few people following us. Dr. Stephens set up his camera and after exhausting the possible scenic shots, he suggested we move to the area near the stream and the Ledges.

Our little gallery followed us at some distance. Dr. Stephens shed his coat and hat and was busily setting up again in front of the rock formations. The original gallery had arrived on the scene and in no time at all nearly one hundred people had gathered in a loose semi-circle around the busy photographer, who seemingly had not noticed them. About this time, that genial oldster, Custodian Carl Fritz Henning, appeared on the scene. The nearest spectator asked him why the man was taking so many pictures. Henning replied that these pictures would appear in the rotogravure section of a big Sunday paper, and he hoped no one bothered the photographer. Attention immediately increased as the watchers noted that Dr. Stephens rapidly clicked the shutter, changed filters on the lenses, and took frequent readings with his light meter.

The sky began to cloud over and the photographing was at an end. Dr. Stephens turned around and started toward the group with a stern face. A gap appeared in the ranks and he walked through to encounter the grinning faces of Mr. Henning and the writer. We thought he was going to be angry with us, when Henning informed him of what he had told the gathering. Then Dr. Stephens broke into a broad grin and began to chuckle. He said he couldn't blame them much because he must have looked like some kind of character, attired in his linen duster and old campaign hat.

September 5, 1930, broke as a fine crisp morning, when Dr. Stephens and I left Lake Andes, South Dakota, and headed for the Wheeler Bridge. It is more famous now than it was then, for during 1953 this big steel bridge was moved in sections, by huge barges, from its site at Wheeler to the more northern town of Chamberlain, where it was set up for further use. The old site was rapidly covered by backwater from the huge Fort Randall Dam just a few miles downstream.

On this morning in 1930 we crossed the bridge and soon reached the heights above, preparatory to taking a few pictures of the wild, rugged valley of the Missouri River to the north. We walked out into a roadside pasture. Dr. Stephens placed his tripod and began to check light conditions. I proceeded to wander slowly nearby, usually looking at the ground as this was notorious rattlesnake country. I hadn't walked more than 25 feet from the camera when I spotted a medium-sized prairie rattler coiled in position for action. Probably due to the coolness of the morning, the snake was lying there quietly but watchful.

Our photographer took numerous exposures and finally decided the scenic work was over. He turned and said: "You know, Bill, I would sure like to get some pictures of a rattlesnake. I have never seen one out in the wilds."

My reply was, "I think I can accommodate you." I motioned him to come toward me and told him to look on the ground. It was with no little



"WE SOON REACHED THE HEIGHTS ABOVE, PREPARATORY TO TAKING A FEW PICTURES OF THE WILD, RUGGED VALLEY OF THE MISSOURI RIVER."



PRAIRIE RATTLER IN ROADSIDE PASTURE

excitement that he quickly set up his camera near the snake. After several exposures and some note-taking on the coloration of the snake for future tinting of the slides, he turned to me and asked how long I had known it was there.

I explained that I had found it after he began work, and I didn't want to disturb him while he was so busy with his camera. I added that I had been keeping a close watch on both him and the snake, as I did not want them to come together while the Doctor wandered around taking light readings and making different angle shots. Dr. Stephens was very deliberate in his thinking. He finally turned to me and admitted that he likely would have been very nervous had he known there was a rattlesnake coiled there looking at him, and probably I had handled it the best way, after all.

Twenty or thirty years ago the name "North Ravine" was synonymous with bird-watching as far as Morningside College ornithology classes were concerned. The spot was just a few blocks straight north of the campus. It was an easy place to reach and was often resorted to by Dr. Stephens when he wanted to take a class on a quick field trip. This was also the spot where Dr. Stephens and a co-worker, Professor R. W. Greynald, used to do a bit of collecting when they were both collector ornithologists.

North Ravine is tied in with the names of "Bacon Hollow," of local historic interest, and "Schuleins Woods." North Ravine is the southern prong of a three-prong drainage area. Each area was blessed with small springs. The resulting streams with their tree and brush-covered slopes made fine areas for birds. The areas were never developed into picnic grounds and remained fairly intact until recent years, when spots along the ravines were cleared and shacks put up. Beginning in 1954, North Ravine becomes but a memory to this bird-watcher, for in one fell swoop, the Ravine has disappeared. Huge bulldozers began carving a main super-highway down through the middle of North Ravine from one end to the other. The right-of-way was legally obtained from the human residents along the route, but who asked the shade-loving summer dwellers, the Ovenbird, Towhee, and Wood Thrush, for right-of-way through their summer dwellings? They have been shoved into less safe and unfavorable areas and in a few years will be crowded out of the Sioux City area forever.

To students of local history, Bacon Hollow is associated with the untimely death of two (then) young Sioux City family men. Henry Cordua, father of the late Mrs. A. C. Hoskins of Sioux City, and Thomas Roberts lived in Sioux City near the present sight of the Badgerow Building, but had the family gardens planted in the rich black loam of Bacon Hollow. The three or four-mile trip to the gardens was made by team and wagon, and it was there they had gone on July 9, 1861, to tend their potato patches. While at work they were suddenly surrounded by a raiding band of Indians, probably some of the same band who caused the Spirit Lake massacre and other depredations in this area. Mrs. Hoskins told me that her father had a fine matched team of black horses. It can be surmised that the Indians demanded the horses and were probably refused; in retaliation, the Indians killed the two men, took the horses and moved on. The Indians were never caught. Dr. Stephens knew of the above incident, of course. Shortly after the plain, gray, granite marker was erected in Bacon Hollow to mark the approximate place of the killing, we drove out to look at the monument.

One bright October afternoon about 25 years ago the writer elected to make a field trip to the Ravine. As I started down the path and approached the leaning dead tree shown in the photograph, I heard the chatter of a wren. It sounded different to me, and it certainly was, for I was soon watching my first Winter Wren. I had once heard Dr. Stephens say that he would like a good, close look at a Winter Wren. Here was his chance. I ran most of the few blocks to Morningside College, rushed into the Main Hall and upstairs to the Biology section. The day was warm and Dr. Stephens had his classroom door open. I approached the door and signalled wildly to him. In the middle of a sentence he turned and hurried out the rear door into his office. I was right there, told him of my find, and said if we hurried perhaps he could get to see it. Without returning to his class, he told an assistant to take over and find something for the class to do. We were immediately out of the building and headed for his car, which he happened to have



NORTH RAVINE, NEAR THE SPOT WHERE THE WINTER WREN WAS FOUND

near by. We found the little Winter Wren just where I had left him. We spent the rest of the afternoon watching the little fellow and satisfying Dr. Stephens' hunger for a better look at a Winter Wren. After this little incident I knew that I had the honor of associating with one of the few, complete bird-watchers.

One of the highlights of the 1928 All-Iowa tour of T. C. Stephens, Stubert Stephens and the writer was the long-awaited, overnight visit to the Sherman Homestead, the home of Althea and Dr. Amelia Sherman. We reached National, coming by the way of McGregor, late in the afternoon of August 25. Miss Althea met us at the door and informed us that we were fortunate in having come that day, as the church folks were having an ice cream social over at the old fairgrounds that evening; we would now go as her guests. We were taken right into the household, as Dr. Stephens was an old, personal friend of the Shermans and I had previously met Miss Althea at bird club conventions.

Our primary consideration of the moment was to decide how to settle a rather delicate situation, without any ruffled feelings. Dr. Stephens took me aside and told me the sisters did not like to entertain menfolk under their roof for the night. Althea out of politeness kept insisting we take a room



THE SHERMAN SISTERS AT NATIONAL, IOWA

Miss Althea R. Sherman (left) and Dr. Amelia Sherman. Photograph by T. C. Stephens. Reprinted from "Iowa Bird Life", June, 1943.



THE SHERMAN HOME IN THE VILLAGE OF NATIONAL, IOWA
From a drawing by Althea R. Sherman. Reprinted from "Birds of an Iowa Dooryard" (Christopher Publishing House, Boston, Mass., 1952).

upstairs, but the Doctor was not enthusiastic on the point. He suggested that it was a matter of minutes to put up the umbrella tent and we guests would be comfortable in our sleeping bags. Althea at once led us to a heavily grassed spot in the shadow of the Chimney Swift Tower, and there we quickly made camp. We washed in the kitchen and commented that our outdoor garb was hardly fit for a social. Althea's retort was sharp and quick and to the effect that those farmers could like it or lump it. We got a good laugh out of it and Miss Sherman's eyes really sparkled.

The sisters changed to their best long, black dresses with high, tight collars. We drove to the fairgrounds and were soon enjoying ice cream and cake at the social. Althea insisted on our receiving several helpings of the food. The Sherman sisters seemed to know everybody there, regardless of what generation of a family was represented. Occasionally Althea would whisper a tart remark to Dr. Stephens about some character who had probably been unkind to her in the past. Just before we left, Althea had several large pieces of cake wrapped in paper napkins. She looked at Stubert and suggested that maybe he was still hungry; if so, he could have more cake when we got home.

Upon returning to the Sherman home, Althea insisted that we climb to the top of the Chimney Swift Tower. Although at this time Miss Sherman was almost 75 years old, she insisted on carrying her own lantern and climbed the many steps to the top. She adjusted the lantern while we looked into the artificial chimney and saw several swifts looking at us sleepily.

We had planned to start early in the morning, but even before we were up we heard Miss Sherman at the old windlass well, drawing fresh water for breakfast. The sisters insisted that we have breakfast with them. While we were eating Althea was hovering about and worrying that we weren't getting enough to eat; she apologized that they weren't used to feeding men. When we were nearly finished she brought out the fine cake from the social and said that we each must eat a piece. After breakfast Miss Sherman took us on a tour of the yard. She pointed out trees planted by her father, various and sundry bird nests, all occupied the past summer, nesting boxes of Flickers and Screech Owls in the barn, and other things of interest. The yard itself was a beautiful tangle of long blue-grass, wild flowers, plum thickets and other brushy areas.

The interior of the big, old house was most interesting, with its old-fashioned furniture and fixtures, and few of the conveniences of today. On the walls were several of Miss Sherman's paintings. She brought out a collection of bird paintings and sketches and told us the story of how she happened to paint each one. She also showed us her notebooks and told us she was working to get them all completed for publishing. She said she was bothered all summer by many curious people, who came just to "snoop" and not look at birds; she couldn't keep her project going as she would have liked. Miss Sherman asked me if I would like copies of her papers, and promised that as soon as she got caught up a little she would hunt them out for me. Upon returning home I had forgotten about the offer, until one day an envelope addressed in the large, bold handwriting of Althea Sherman was received and in it were the separates.

The Sherman sisters were rather adverse to posing for pictures. It was with rare diplomacy that Dr. Stephens got the two to pose near the wooden gate that led to the road. A visit with Miss Althea Sherman was a wonderful event in the life of a young bird student. I have realized since that on that day I was in the presence of another of those rare personages—a complete bird-watcher.

THE BURTIS H. WILSON JOURNALS

As Studied by JAMES HODGES

DAVENPORT, IOWA

(Concluded from the March issue)

Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Abundant summer resident.

Black-billed Cuckoo. Tolerably common summer resident.

Screech Owl. Common resident.

Great-horned Owl. Tolerably common resident.

Barred Owl. A rare resident, one shot in Davenport.

Long-eared Owl. This seemed to be the most common species of owl. Although he listed it as a tolerably common resident, it did become very common during the winter months. Every year he found at least two nests. The bird was found in the largest numbers at Pine Hill Cemetery.

Saw-whet Owl. Wilson is the only individual who, so far as I know, found this species in any numbers during the year. He listed it as a rare winter resident, but his journals contain quite a few records. He mentions that they feed on mice and English Sparrows. He also collected several. They were more common during January through April.

Whip-poor-will. Tolerably common resident. He did not record it very often in his journals.

Nighthawk. Abundant summer resident.

Chimney Swift. Abundant summer resident.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Abundant summer resident.

Belted Kingfisher. Common summer resident.

Northern Flicker. Abundant summer resident, with a few wintering individuals.

Red-bellied Woodpecker. A tolerably common resident.

Red-headed Woodpecker. Abundant summer resident, with a few wintering birds.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Abundant migrant.

Hairy Woodpecker. A common resident.

Downy Woodpecker. Abundant resident.

Crested Flycatcher. Common summer resident.

Phoebe. Abundant summer resident; the earliest nest on April 23 in his list, but in the journals he has a nest on April 14. The nests were occasionally placed on the perpendicular walls of washouts in clay soil.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. A rare spring and fall migrant.

Acadian Flycatcher. Rare, with only one record.

Alder Flycatcher. A common summer resident.

Least Flycatcher. A rare migrant, with only one collected.

Kingbird. Abundant summer resident.

Wood Pewee. Abundant summer resident. The earliest nest was June 15, 1889.

Horned Lark. This has always been a difficult group for both the field student and the taxonomist. In his list Wilson lists: "*Octocoris alpestris*. Horned Lark. Tolerably common winter resident; *Octocoris alpestris praticola*. Prairie Horned Lark. Abundant summer resident." In his journals Wilson listed a Common Horned Lark which he collected in large numbers during the winter months; Horned Lark of which he collected a few during the winter. Western Horned Lark, one killed on February 16, 1889; and a Shore Lark which was quite abundant on February 17, 1888. He recorded a large number of the birds killed, with their measurements in inches.

Tree Swallow. A common summer resident. On November 4, 1890, he recorded one individual, a late record for this species.

Bank Swallow. An abundant summer resident. For several years a colony of about 200 birds nested on a high bluff at 38th street in Rock Island, Illinois. Apparently this was the only nesting colony in the vicinity.

Rough-winged Swallow. Common summer resident.

Barn Swallow. Common summer resident.

Cliff Swallow. An abundant summer resident according to his list. His journals do not mention this species very often. The only nesting group mentioned is one of 50 birds found on April 24, 1898, around an old barn in Gilbert Town, Illinois.

Blue Jay. An abundant resident, and even more numerous during the migrations. Nest with five eggs on May 14, 1892. He collected 36 birds of this species. The crops of the majority contained nuts, corn, seeds, green shoots, vegetable matter, beetles, larvae, other insects, gravel, cinder, brick, and slate.

Crow. An abundant resident. Earliest nest with five eggs, April 2, 1890. According to his journals, this species was quite migratory in both spring and fall. For September 9, 1897, he records a nesting site of this species. It was situated near Daytown, about 25 miles east of Rock Island, Illinois. The Crows occupied a small grove of trees on a farm. The farmer who owned the land apparently liked Crows, for he hauled several wagon-loads of corn to the roost for them to eat. Later, he began to dislike them. He killed the birds and the roost was soon deserted.

Black-capped Chickadee. Abundant resident.

White-breasted Nuthatch. Abundant resident.

Red-breasted Nuthatch. Listed it as a rare migrant seen more often in the fall.

Brown Creeper. Abundant spring and fall migrant. He found it nesting in 1891, the only published record for Iowa thus far.

House Wren. Abundant summer resident.

Winter Wren. Tolerably common migrant in the fall, rare during the spring. He always found a few during each migration.

Long-billed Marsh Wren. Rare migrant. He collected several.

Catbird. Very abundant summer resident.

Brown Thrasher. Abundant summer resident.

Robin. Very abundant summer resident. A few found during the winter. Found a nest on April 19, 1889, with eggs.

Wood Thrush. Abundant summer resident.

Hermit Thrush. Common migrant.

Olive-backed Thrush. Abundant migrant. Most abundant during the second week of May.

Gray-cheeked Thrush. Abundant migrant in the spring, but seldom seen during the fall.

Veery (Wilson's Thrush). Rare migrant.

Bluebird. Abundant summer resident from February 4 to November 27. Found five eggs on April 16, 1887. In a mild winter a few would remain. The nesting site competition between this species and the Black-capped Chickadee was very keen.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Rare summer resident. Apparently the basis for this record is a lone bird observed at Muscatine, Iowa, on June 19, 1890.

Golden-crowned Kinglet. Abundant migrant.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Abundant migrant.

Bohemian Waxwing. One collected on November 21, 1888.

Cedar Waxwing. Abundant but irregular migrant and common summer resident. Seen feeding young in the nest June 28, 1887. In his journal he records a flock of 150 feeding on wild berries on November 20, 1898.

Migrant Shrike. Common summer resident.

Northern Shrike. Common winter resident, formerly much more common than the last few years. It rarely comes into the city in pursuit of the English Sparrow, but formerly it frequently came even into the business district. It is interesting to note that when he wrote about the shrike being so common, he also mentioned the abundance of osage-orange hedge. During the years when this hedge was being destroyed, he mentioned that with it went the two species of shrikes.

Bell's Vireo. Common summer resident. On June 5, 1890, a nest with one egg 3 feet from the ground in a box-elder tree and June 9th, 1891, a nest in a currant bush.

Yellow-throated Vireo. Common migrant and rare summer resident.

Blue-headed Vireo. Rather rare migrant.

Red-eyed Vireo. Abundant summer resident.

Philadelphia Vireo. Tolerably common migrant.

Warbling Vireo. Abundant summer resident.

Black and White Warbler. Tolerably common migrant.

Prothonotary Warbler. Rare summer resident. Seen from May 2 to June 5, but no nests found in the county. It breeds near Muscatine commonly on the wooded bottoms along the Mississippi River.

Blue-winged Warbler. Rare migrant seen only in the spring.

Tennessee Warbler. Tolerably common migrant.

Orange-crowned Warbler. Probably a common migrant, but seldom noticed.

Nashville Warbler. Common migrant.

Parula Warbler. Tolerably common migrant.

Yellow Warbler. Abundant summer resident. Earliest nest with eggs, May 24, 1887. Leaves early for the south.

Magnolia Warbler. Common migrant.

Myrtle Warbler. The most abundant migrant warbler.

Black-throated Blue Warbler. Rare migrant.

Cape May Warbler. Rather rare migrant, not seen in the fall.

Black-throated Green Warbler. Common migrant.

Blackburnian Warbler. Tolerably common migrant, no fall records.

Chestnut-sided Warbler. Common migrant.

Bay-breasted Warbler. Rare migrant. Seen only on May 9 and 26, 1888.

Black-poll Warbler. Rare migrant.

Pine Warbler. A rather rare migrant with the only fall record of September 21, 1889.

Palm Warbler. Abundant spring migrant but no fall records.

Oven-bird. Common summer resident.

Northern Water-thrush. Rather common spring migrant, but no fall records.

Grinnell's Water-thrush. Tolerably common migrant in both spring and fall.

Louisiana Water-thrush. Rather rare and seen only in the spring.

Mourning Warbler. Rare migrant.

Northern Yellow-throat. Abundant summer resident.

Yellow-breasted Chat. Rare straggler, May 30, 1889. Also one seen on May 23, 1900.

Hooded Warbler. On May 1, 1898, he saw one at the Rock Island Arsenal. It was in full plumage, came within 5 feet, and allowed him to study it for quite some time. He also records in perfect detail the plumage of this species but did not include it in his published list.

Wilson's Warbler. Tolerably common migrant.

American Redstart. Common summer resident on the wooded islands in the Mississippi River. Four fresh eggs, May 30, 1891.

Canada Warbler. Rare migrant with only spring records.

English Sparrow. Abundant resident.

Bobolink. Common summer resident. Earliest arrival, April 28, 1887. Fresh eggs on May 28, 1889.

Eastern Meadowlark. Abundant summer resident, with an occasional wintering bird. Eggs, May 27, 1887.

Red-winged Blackbird. Abundant summer resident. A few wintered. Earliest eggs, May 21, 1887.

Orchard Oriole. Abundant summer resident, with eggs on May 21, 1887.

Baltimore Oriole. Abundant summer resident. Five eggs on May 30, 1889.

Rusty Blackbird. Abundant migrant. Usually found in flocks with the other blackbirds and grackles. A pair wintered at the Rock Island Arsenal during the winter of 1899.

Bronzed Grackle. Abundant summer resident. Earliest eggs, May 1, 1886. A colony of several hundred pairs used to nest in Pine Hill Cemetery. In recent years the colony has been reduced to about a dozen pairs, no doubt due to persistent robbing of their nests by boys. It is interesting to note that at the present writing (1953), Pine Hill Cemetery is still the only place in this area where this species can be found nesting in numbers.

Cowbird. Abundant summer resident. The earliest eggs were found on May 3, 1890, in the nest of a Phoebe.

Scarlet Tanager. Common summer resident.

Summer Tanager. A rare straggler.

Cardinal. Although he does not mention this bird in his list, he recorded in his journal for May 23, 1900, that he was told they were observed occasionally on the islands below the city of Davenport. He considered the species as rare in this vicinity.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Abundant summer resident. Earliest nest is May 13, 1886.

Indigo Bunting. Abundant summer resident.

Dickcissel. Abundant summer resident. A nest containing four eggs on April 27, 1889. April 25 was the average arrival date.

Evening Grosbeak. Rare winter visitor. Seen from November 24 to January 21.

Purple Finch. A common migrant. He also collected a few each winter.

Redpoll. Not common winter resident, seen as late as April 1.

Pine Siskin. Not mentioned in the published list, but in his journal for January 7, 1888, he recorded one.

Goldfinch. Irregular winter resident, and an abundant summer resident.

Red Crossbill. In his list he recorded it as an irregular winter visitor or resident. However, in 1888 he found it to be a tolerably common winter visitor from the first of November to the middle of March, always found in small flocks. In 1899 and afterward he made very little mention of this species, only infrequent individual birds.

Red-eyed Towhee. Abundant summer resident.

Savannah Sparrow. Tolerably common spring migrant.

Grasshopper Sparrow. Common summer resident, with a nest with five eggs on May 27, 1889.

Vesper Sparrow. Common summer resident. Nest with four young found May 22, 1889.

Lark Sparrow. Common summer resident.

Slate-colored Junco. Very abundant migrant and common winter visitors from September 21 to May 5.

Tree Sparrow. Abundant winter visitor from October 17 to April 16.

Chipping Sparrow. Abundant summer resident. First eggs, a set of four on May 1, 1886.

Clay-colored Sparrow. Not included in his published list, but according to his journals it was a tolerably common migrant.

Field Sparrow. Abundant summer resident. Earliest nest with eggs, May 1, 1886, while the latest nest with slightly incubated eggs, July 26, 1889.

Harris's Sparrow. Rare migrant.

White-crowned Sparrow. Tolerably common migrant.

White-throated Sparrow. Abundant migrant. Occasionally one would winter.

Fox Sparrow. Abundant migrant.

Lincoln's Sparrow. Tolerably common spring migrant; the only fall record is October 1, 1891.

Swamp Sparrow. Common migrant.

Song Sparrow. Abundant summer resident.

Smith's Longspur. Not common migrant in the spring, from March 30 to April 16. He shot at least one of this species. He found them from two individuals up to a 100 in a flock. They were found in grain fields. It is strange that he does not list the Lapland Longspur, the one that is found more often in this vicinity.

Snow Bunting. Not included in the published list, but in his journals he gives two records: January 21, 1888, one flock; November 19, 1893, a flock of 25 along the Mississippi River.

THE DES MOINES CONVENTION

By MRS. GEORGE CROSSLEY

Secy.-Treas., Iowa Ornithologists' Union

The Des Moines Audubon Society was host to the 32nd annual convention of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, held Saturday and Sunday, May 15 and 16, at Hotel Kirkwood. Registration for the meeting was at 9 a.m.

The morning session opened at 9:30 with a cordial welcome by A. C. Berkowitz, President of the host club, and past president of our Union. Adjutant-General of the State of Iowa, Fred C. Tangney, extended greetings in behalf of Governor William S. Beardsley, who was unable to attend. Our President, Dr. E. L. Kozicky, responded to these greetings of welcome.

The first number on the program was the film, "The Arctic Tundra and Migratory Birds in Iowa," presented by James G. Sieh of the State Conservation Commission. These colored pictures were filmed in 1934 when a small group (including Mr. Sieh) was sent to Alaska to study the perma-frost, to sketch in accurate surface geology, and write up and locate possible sites for airfields. The contrasts in topography: rugged mountains, glaciers, undulating tundra, lakes and marshes; the nesting sites of many of Iowa's migratory water and shore birds; the flora of the various habitats; and the human element, the Eskimo and his culture, were shown and interestingly described by Mr. Sieh.

Thomas Morrissey of Davenport followed with his paper on "Why Birds Act the Way They Do." He discussed the theory that birds, being highly evolved reptiles with a well-developed optic area, are governed highly by emotions, which are automatic or instinctive reactions to given stimuli. His talk was illustrated with slides by Fred and Tom Kent, of Iowa City.

An Iowa Conservation Commission film, "Long-legged Fishermen," pictured the beauty and grace of these birds, along with such features as their favorite habitats, nesting and rearing of young, eating habits and types of food necessary for survival. Ten members of this fisher group are to be seen in Iowa. The film concluded with the thought that these birds must have the friendship of man if they are to continue a part of our nature picture.

The paper, "Who Was The First Ornithologist?" by Dr. J. H. Ennis, featured the life and work of Francis Willughby into which Dr. Ennis has made considerable research.

In his paper on "Bird Population Surveys," A. Lang Baily of the Davenport Public Museum gave pertinent information for local bird clubs which would provide purpose to birding activities and result in permanent local records and scientific data for Iowa ornithology. A simple yet satisfactory population survey for the amateur, as successfully used by the Detroit and Colorado Bird Clubs, was described. The data recorded the number of individuals seen, the number of times a species is observed, and the party hours spent in the field. Mr. Baily stressed the importance of having these surveys made on a voluntary basis in a cooperative group project, with accuracy held as a criterion, and always on the level of the amateur ornithologist.

Mrs. R. A. Walker, president of the Madison Audubon Society, concluded the morning program with a short presentation and the showing of slides on "An Audubon Camp in The Midwest." This camp is located near Spooner, Wisconsin, and will be opened in 1955.

"Painting Birds," the first number on the afternoon program, was presented by Maynard Reece, well-known Iowa bird artist. The infinite patience and detailed sketching necessary and required of an artist in preparation for a bird painting were interestingly described and illustrated by Mr. Reece. These preparations included the ease of observations of museum specimens, and the far more difficult observations of live individuals in their natural habitat, to provide the natural backgrounds, life-like positions, and characteristic movement. Since there is an increase in amateur painters, Mr. Reece advised everyone to get a box of paints and try it. (A number of his bird paintings were on the walls of the auditorium for the enjoyment of the group.)

Wesley E. Lanyon, of the University of Wisconsin, gave a report on his findings on "Current Research on the Eastern and Western Meadowlark." Using trapped wild birds and hand-raised fledglings of both species, first-hand observations were made and differences measured and described. The analysis of only a small part of a not-complete study indicates that the Eastern and Western Meadowlarks are two distinct species, supporting the rulings of the A.O.U. in 1910. Slides were shown illustrating specific marks of identification and marking the differences between the two birds. Tape recordings and the pictorial record of songs from a sound spectrograph gave the song of each species and the singing of both songs by one bird. Regardless of pattern of the song sung, the Eastern Meadowlark always sang on a higher pitch, as much as 1000 cycles, than did the Western. This difference in pitch indicates the physiological difference in the vocal apparatus of the two larks. The theory of "Hybridization" attributed to the singing of the two songs by one bird has a substitute explanation from the findings of Mr. Lanyon. His experiments and tape recordings gave evidence that the Meadowlark song is learned rather than inherited. Among the isolated, hand-raised fledglings it was found that the bird did not develop the song of its species, but a song based on the common birds it heard and with which it was associated during the first summer and fall. Thus he recorded a Meadowlark singing the song of a Red-winged Blackbird. The research included experiments on the behavior of birds raised in captivity. It was noted that the distribution of Meadowlarks had undergone changes in which the western species is now outnumbering the eastern in areas where once it was almost unknown, indicating changes in the physical geography due to intensive agriculture. In habitat preference the Eastern Meadowlark was found to prefer the smaller clearings of rough, more moist, and more heavily timbered

land, and the Western Meadowlark the large grassy expanses of cultivated upland. Mr. Lanyon acknowledged the aid of our members, George Crossley, Thomas Morrissey and Mrs. A. J. Binsfeld, for roadside censuses used in his research. An invitation was extended to our Union to attend the A.O.U. convention meeting at Madison, Wisconsin, next September.

"Winter Movements and Covey Compositions of The Eastern Bob-White, Decatur County, Iowa, 1952-1954," by Roger Boehnke, continued the program. This was a statistical report on the migratory movement of Quail and the loss in Quail population from the juvenile to the adult stage, based on banding records over the two-year period. The program concluded with the showing of the Iowa Conservation Commission color film, "Bob-White Through the Year."

President Edward Kozicky called the meeting to order for the business session. He appointed the following committees: Nominating: Dr. Robert Vane, William Barrett, Lillian Serbousek; Resolutions: Dr. Martin Grant, George Crossley, Dr. George O. Hendrickson; Auditing: C. Esther Copp, Mrs. Robert Ruegnitz; Honorary Membership: Albert C. Berkowitz. The treasurer's report was read and accepted. A balance of \$999.70 was reported in the treasury. The secretary reported a total membership of 305, including 30 new members gained to date in 1954. Librarian Dr. J. H. Ennis reported receiving an autographed copy of "Birds of Washington Park, Albany, N.Y." from Mrs. Lillian (Dayton) Stoner, six reprints, and past issues of our magazine for the library. He again requested members to turn in to the library all available copies of the earlier issues of "Iowa Bird Life." Editor Fred Pierce requested members to send in articles for publication in our quarterly. Woodward Brown reported on the "Iowa Distributional Check list," as compiled by him from data received, with copies sent to the members.

Dr. Ennis gave the report of the committee on the problem of opening a hunting season on Mourning Doves in Iowa. After discussion the following motion was adopted by a majority vote: "That our Iowa Ornithologists' Union go on record as favoring retention of the present legal classification of the Mourning Dove as a migratory bird without open season." Another motion was made and carried that the Iowa Ornithologists' Union inform the Iowa State representatives and senators of its action on the above motion.

Members met again at 6:30 p.m. at the hotel for the annual banquet. A special feature was the presenting of an honorary membership to Mrs. Toni Wendelburg, a charter member from Des Moines, by Albert C. Berkowitz. Philip DuMont, biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C., was the guest speaker. His theme, "National Wildlife Refuges and Endangered Species of Birds," was illustrated with colored slides by W. F. Kubichek, formerly of Iowa. The characteristic features of and wildlife protected in these areas were interestingly described and beautifully pictured. Singling out from among the many refuges, which had increased in number from one in 1903 to 282 up to the present time, Mr. DuMont gave detailed accounts of many of the coastal areas and a number inland. The popularity of these areas is a problem in that they are overrun by people before facilities are available to handle them. Among the endangered bird species those of immediate concern are Whooping Crane, Everglades Kite, and California Condor.

Sunday breakfast was served at Bishop Cafeteria at 4 a.m. Five field trips were scheduled: 1) Brenton Slough; 2) Impounding Reservoir and Walnut Woods State Park; 3) Pine Hill Cemetery, Parker's Woods and Fisher's Lake; 4) Morningstar, Fisher's Lake and Dove Woods; 5) Waterworks Park, Gray's Lake. All groups met at Walnut Woods State Park for one o'clock luncheon. A short business meeting followed. The total bird count was 157, a record for convention time. Miss Esther Copp gave the report of the Aud-

iting Committee which was accepted. The Resolutions report was accepted as read by Dr. Martin Grant. Dr. Robert Vane of the Nominating Committee submitted the names of the present officers for re-election; they were elected by unanimous ballot cast by the Secretary-Treasurer upon motion of the voting members. A very enjoyable convention was then adjourned.

Resolutions.—BE IT RESOLVED that most special thanks be tendered to Albert Berkowitz, the many responsible committee members of the Des Moines Audubon Society (as enumerated by him at the banquet), and the staff of the Kirkwood Hotel for planning so carefully and making our stay in Des Moines so eminently satisfactory and agreeable.

That the highest honors be given to the officers of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, for their faithful service, above and beyond the call of duty, during the past year. While it is impossible to enumerate each action, we would like to signal out Dr. Kozicky for arranging for and presiding at the convention; Mr. Brown for his intensive work on the Iowa Distributional Check list; Mrs. Crossley for her efficient handling of the multitudinous business affairs; Mr. Pierce for his industry in publishing the Journal; and Dr. Ennis for caring for and maintaining the library.

That our deepest appreciation be expressed to the several people who have come from outside the state to help make our meetings a success by appearing on the program: Philip DuMont for his beautiful description of the Wildlife Refuges, Wesley Lanyon for assisting us in keeping our Meadowlarks straight, and Mrs. R. A. Walker for introducing us to the projected Midwest Audubon Camp. For bringing the excellent films on Herons and Quail we thank the State Conservation Commission, and for the dramatic and colorful paintings of birds that graced the meeting rooms we acknowledge our indebtedness to Maynard Reece, especially for telling us how easily it is done.

That we tell the National Audubon Society of our support of their opposition to the shooting of Golden Eagles from airplanes in Texas, as described in a recent issue of "Audubon Magazine."

That the Iowa Conservation Commission be commended for the work it has begun in studying, by census methods, the status of the Mourning Dove in Iowa, and that we offer, individually and as an organization, to assist in the project in any way which the Commission might deem to be serviceable. For example, if the Commission felt that more local censusing would be valuable, it could make suggestions, to be published in "Iowa Bird Life," as to how Iowa Ornithologists' Union members could make individual censuses, the results of which might be sent in to the Commission. Ignoring for the moment all esthetic and psychological factors, certainly no change in the game-bird status of the Mourning Dove should be considered without at least a careful statistical analysis of the present population and a detailed consideration of the many biological relationships involved, such as weed-seed consumption.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin L. Grant, Chairman

George Hendrickson

George Crossley

Attendance Register.—AMES, A. J. Englehorn, Dr. Paul L. Errington, M. L. Ferguson, Dr. Geo. Hendrickson, Elizabeth Hoyt, Dr. and Mrs. E. L. Kozicky, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Johnson; CEDAR FALLS, Dr. and Mrs. Martin Grant; CEDAR RAPIDS, Dorothy Brunner, C. Esther Copp, Margaret Dickey, Lavina Dragoo, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Petranek, Lillian Serbousek, Dr. and Mrs. Robt. Vane, Pauline Wershofen, Myra Willis; DAVENPORT, A. Lang Baily, Thos. Morrissey, Peter C. Petersen, Jr., Mrs. Pete C. Petersen; DES MOINES, Dorothy Anderson, Ethel Badgley, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Berkowitz, Mrs. A. J. Binsfeld, Jerry Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Woodward Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Jos.

Chamberlain, Ruth Chapman, Philip Clampitt, Ruth Dallinger, Dick Hanson, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Haskell, Mrs. Adolph Johnson, Gary Kline, Olivia McCabe, Bertha Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Musgrove, Jean Musgrove, Loretta Pease, Dr. and Mrs. Harold Peasley, Evelyn Peck, Ida Peck, Mary E. Peck, Mrs. Tom Pettit, Maynard Reece, Estella Reynolds, Irene Smith, Bruce F. Stiles, Floy Vest, Mrs. Toni Wendelburg, Lynn Willcockson; DUBUQUE, Mrs. W. R. Gruwell, Mrs. Mildred Pregler, Mrs. Robt. Ruegnitz, Ival Schuster, Edra Walter; ESTHERVILLE, Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Jones; FAIRFIELD, Ada Edwards, Margaret Herdliska, Janet Nichols; FARLEY, Mr. and Mrs. George Crossley; GRINNELL, Henry Weston; INDEPENDENCE, Mrs. W. O. Benthin, Ruth Funk; IOWA CITY, F. W. Kent; LAMONI, Mrs. W. C. DeLong, Dallas Spencer; MT. VERNON, Marie W. Berry, David Ennis, Dr. and Mrs. Harold Ennis, Mrs. G. H. Scobey; NEWTON, Larry Lloyd, Ivan Moore, Larry Moore, Mr. and Mrs. John Paul Moore, Sam Moore; OKOBOJI, Mr. and Mrs. James Sieh; OSKALOOSA, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Partridge, Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Watson; OTTUMWA, Mrs. C. U. Soots; SIGOURNEY, Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Millikin; SIOUX CITY, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Barrett, Edna Brower, Ruth Sampson, Gertrude Weaver; TAMA, Mrs. J. G. Ennis; VAN METER, Mrs. Agnes Harvey; WATERLOO, Helen Hawkins, Russell Hays, Pearl Rader, Dr. C. W. Robertson; WEBSTER CITY, Dennis Carter; WEST DES MOINES, Mrs. W. A. Kinnaird; WINTHROP, Mrs. K. B. Harrington, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Pierce; WOODWARD, Richard Guthrie; CUCAMONGA, CALIF., Gene Christman; EVANSTON, ILL., Mrs. W. G. DuMont; MADISON, WIS., Wesley Lanyon, Mrs. Vernia Lanyon, Mrs. R. A. Walker; WASHINGTON, D.C., Philip A. DuMont. Total registered, 124.

Birds Seen on the Field Trip, May 16, 1954.—Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue, Green, and Black-crowned Night Herons, American Bittern, Canada and Blue Geese, Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Shoveller, Wood, Ring-necked and Lesser Scaup Ducks, Hooded Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's, Red-Tailed, Red-shouldered, Duck and Sparrow Hawks, Bob-white, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sora, American Coot, Semipalmated, Golden and Black-bellied Plovers, Killdeer, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs, Pectoral, White-rumped, Baird's, Least, Red-backed, Stilt and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dowitcher, Hudsonian Godwit, Wilson's Phalarope, Herring, Ring-billed and Franklin's Gulls, Forster's, Common and Black Terns, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos, Barred Owl, Whip-poor-will, Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-thr. Hummingbird, Kingfisher, Flicker, Red-bellied, Red-headed, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Eastern Kingbird, Crested, Least and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Phoebe, Wood Pewee, Prairie Horned Lark, Tree, Bank, Rough-winged, Barn and Cliff Swallows, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Crow, Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House and Carolina Wrens, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood, Olive-backed, Grey-cheeked and Willow Thrushes, Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Sprague's and American Pipits, Cedar Waxwing, Migrant Shrike, Starling, Bell's, Yellow-throated, Blue-headed, Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos, Black and White, Prothonotary, Golden-winged, Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Parula, Yellow, Magnolia, Cape May, Myrtle, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Black-poll, Palm, Kentucky, Mourning and Wilson's Warblers, Oven-bird, Grinnell's and Louisiana Water-thrushes, Northern Yellow-throat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Redstart, Bobolink, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Bronzed Grackle, Cowbird, Scarlet Tanager, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Goldfinch, Red-eyed Towhee, English, Savannah, Grasshopper, Vesper, Lark, Chipping, Field, White-crowned, White-throated, Lincoln's and Song Sparrows. Total, 157.

GENERAL NOTES

Red Crossbills at Dubuque.—I am happy to report that I observed Red Crossbills in Linwood Cemetery, Dubuque, on the morning of April 6, 1954. I saw four feeding on the cones of larch trees.—MRS. ROBERT RUEGNITZ, Dubuque, Iowa.

Prairie Chickens on Booming Grounds.—Elden Stempel, upland game biologist for the State Conservation Commission, reported that Iowa's Prairie Chickens were again gathering on their southern Iowa "stomping grounds" for their spring courtship ceremonies. Stempel wrote: "Yesterday morning (May 5, 1954) was the first good morning this year for locating booming Prairie Chickens on the Appanoose County area. One or more Prairie Chicken cocks boomed on the west side of the area and chickens were also active on two booming grounds just south of the Iowa-Missouri line. Activity was of short duration and I did not get to see any of the birds."

The booming of Prairie Chicken cocks during the spring mating season is caused by large air sacs in the neck which are greatly inflated and then violently emptied, causing a "boom" that can be heard for more than a mile. Our Prairie Chickens were doomed by the passing of the native prairie, but a few remnant flocks still cling to some portions of southern Iowa.—JOHN MADSON, State Conservation Commission, Des Moines, Iowa.

Bird Day at Fairfield.—Iowa Bird Life readers may be interested in what we did on Bird Day at Fairfield, 1954. Bird Day is celebrated every year by having something of interest for the elementary school children. This year Dr. Floyd Von Ohlen and Ben J. Taylor took a half day of their busy time to go to the schools and present a program on birds.

Friday, March 19, Dr. Von Ohlen visited Roosevelt and Lincoln Schools and appeared before an assembly. He showed colored slides of birds and migration map slides, and described each one. Afterward he answered questions on bird life that were asked by the children. Mr. Taylor visited Logan and Washington School assemblies and had the same program. The children proved to be an interested, wide-awake audience and asked many questions. Dr. Von Ohlen is a professor at Parsons College. Mr. Taylor is a newspaper man. Both men are ardent bird watchers, never too busy to help others in bird study. Their knowledge and observations have made our bird club meetings very interesting.—ADA EDWARDS, President, Fairfield Bird Club, Fairfield, Iowa.

Christmas Holidays in Texas.—Since the Misses Mary and Katherine Young are a part of our IOU family, a short account of our visit with them at Christmastime, 1953, may be acceptable. We visited them at their home in McAllen, Texas. They are both busy with teaching but have found time to organize an active bird club of about 50 members.

The Christmas bird count was postponed because of unfavorable weather and we missed that; nevertheless, we added 23 to our life list, some of which, such as Chachalaca, Pauraque and Green Jay, are found only in the Valley and surrounding territory. Our friends went with us on a delightful two-day trip to Monterrey, Mexico, and we saw, among others, Pyrrhuloxia, Caracara, White-necked Raven, Mexican Bluebird, Audubon's Warbler, and Bridled Titmouse.

On the way down we stopped at Rockport, Texas, for three nights and enjoyed the privilege of going with Connie Hagar, well known ornithologist, on the bird trip which she takes every morning from 7 to 8. We learned many things about water birds in winter plumage besides adding many new ones: Black Skimmer, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Gull-billed Tern, and others.

The Government has taken over protection of the Whooping Cranes at their winter quarters in Aransas Wildlife Refuge, allowing no visitors. We

missed seeing Wild Turkeys, too, which we had expected to find without fail, especially on the road below King's Ranch.

After our return home Mary wrote that 128 varieties of birds were found on the Christmas count. Their area was the Santa Ana Refuge where they always see the Derby Flycatcher and Couch's Kingbird, so large and striking in appearance. Their club is always divided into small groups for the count, which helps a great deal in the total (Mary and Katherine were formerly active members of the Dubuque Bird Club, and they lived at Dubuque and Waterloo during the years of their Iowa residence).—MR. AND MRS. RALPH JOHNSON, Ames, Iowa.

W. F. Kubichek Photographs Whooping Cranes.—Perhaps some of the members of the IOU will be interested in knowing that a fellow member, W. F. Kubichek, spent a great deal of time during the winter of 1953-54 photographing the 24 Whooping Cranes that wintered on the Aransas Wildlife Refuge, near Austwell, Texas. "Kuby" spent most of November and December at Aransas, returning home on December 20; he went to the area again on February 17, and returned April 11. Photography is incidental to his work as a wildlife management biologist for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

There was a great deal of interest last winter in the 24 remaining whoopers, but unless efforts to protect them succeed, there will be only pictures to tell the tale of this magnificent bird.

We photographed them first in 1939, when the birds were good enough to come close to our blinds for good "close-ups."

Last winter, however, Kuby said it was a different story. The birds were scattered, and the weather bad. He worked from any one of several blinds located near favorite feeding grounds and water holes. His problem began with the choosing of the proper blind near where he hoped the Whoopers would be on that day. Wind direction is taken into consideration when choosing which blind to use, because the whoopers work into the wind when feeding. He had to be in the blind before they arrived. "It usually happened," he said, "that whenever I get in one blind, the birds go to the others."

Spending day after day, week after week, in a small blind accompanied by two tripods, four cameras, binoculars, lunchbox, etc., is not a job for a claustrophobic. Kuby said it helped him adjust to our small apartment.

Wind and dust storms hampered the work last winter, not only because dark, hazy days were not suited to color photography, but even a slight wind made enough vibration when using telephoto lenses to cause the image to waver and bounce when projected on the screen. Once his blind caught fire. Some combustible material with which he lined the inside of the blind exploded as he lit a cigarette. He had difficulty extricating himself and equipment from the blind. He saved all but a few small pieces, and was not seriously burned. During only two or three days of his long watch was he able to find the light right, and the whoopers close enough and performing satisfactorily.—MRS. W. F. KUBICHEK, Alexandria, Virginia.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Mrs. William T. Martin, of Cedar Falls, is a new member of the Union. She was born and reared at Denver, Colorado, and recently moved to Iowa with her husband and four small children. She writes that at first she needed considerable help in identifying some of the Iowa birds, but during the past winter she set up some feeding stations and became intimately acquainted with 21 species of birds. She kept a daily record of all birds that visited her home during the fall and winter, and she intended to continue this useful practice during the spring and fall of 1954.